

COSMOPOLITANISM IN THE HIMALAYAS:  
THE INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS OF  
KHU NU BLA MA STAN 'DZIN RGYAL MTSHAN  
AND HIS SIKKIMESE TEACHER, KHANG GSAR BA BLA MA  
O RGYAN BSTAN 'DZIN RIN PO CHE<sup>1</sup>

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*Introduction*

Students of Himalayan societies are increasingly rethinking the mutual location of the 'centre' and the 'periphery,' in the intellectual and cultural as well as political senses. Centre and periphery have tended to be quite fluid in the Himalayan world, both internally, and *vis à vis* the adjoining cultural areas of India, China and Central Asia. Scholarship is beginning to explore this in multiple ways. For example, a recent collection of essays on Khams and the Sino-Tibetan border area has emphasized the need to place the so-called 'periphery' (in this case Khams) at the 'centre' of accounts, rather than writing political or social history from the more traditional vantage points of either Lhasa or Beijing.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This article is drawn from a more extensive treatment of this and related topics in my Ph.D. dissertation: "Practicing Philosophy: The Intellectual Biography of Khu nu Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen." Research related to this article was supported by a Fulbright-Hays grant for Tibet and India in 2004. I would like to express my thanks to all those who so generously assisted me during my research in 2004. In particular, I am extremely grateful to the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, especially to the Director, Tashi Densapa (Bermiok Rinpoche); to Dr Anna Balikci, to Acarya Tsultrem Gyaltso and to Saul Mullard for their great kindness and extensive help during my research in Gangtok. I am also deeply indebted to Tashi Tsering of the Amnye Machen Institute on numerous counts, especially for urging me to think about many of the connections mentioned in this article and for allowing me to draw on the extraordinary resources of his personal knowledge and archives. Khu nu Rinpoche's main biographers, K. Anrup and mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, were exceptionally helpful and gracious in sharing their great knowledge and allowing me to benefit from their work, and I am extremely grateful to them. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I express my thanks to all Khu nu Rinpoche's disciples, friends and colleagues who have shared their knowledge about him with me. Needless to say, all views and errors expressed here are my own.

<sup>2</sup> See Epstein, 2002.

Religiously and intellectually speaking as well, significant spiritual and intellectual movements have repeatedly emerged from centres of religious practice located in areas of the Plateau other than official 'centres' such as Lhasa.<sup>3</sup> While this article cannot consider the full history of those developments sometimes described as the *'ris med'* movement,<sup>4</sup> one should note the extraordinary degree of intellectual and spiritual richness that characterized Khams during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century period. This richness may again be seen to shift the so-called 'centre' away from Central Tibet in certain respects, although at the same time, Central Tibet was continually involved with and influenced by these developments. Students of Tibetan history will think of many other examples in which the rise and fall of regional powers and the movements of outstanding spiritual and intellectual leaders periodically altered the relative gravity and influence of the various Tibetan regions.

As understanding grows about the complexity of regional centres and their mutual influences across the Plateau and neighbouring areas, it is worth examining the apparently mundane fact of extensive travel across the Himalayan region, as a crucial ingredient of lineage transmission and of the learning process undertaken by individual scholar-saints. One of the most striking elements in the intellectual history of the Himalayan area is the remarkable degree of mobility and cross-regional sharing of ideas that has taken place, in many historical periods. This mobility is a crucial ingredient in the mutual interpenetration and fluidity of the so-called 'periphery' and 'centre' in the Himalayan world.

The far-reaching interpersonal connections of lama-student lineages often transcended geography, long before the era of motorized transportation. In the *ris med* context of the turn of the twentieth century, these interpersonal links often brought together multiple Tibetan Buddhist traditions as well, thus also complicating questions of sectarian identity. The complexity of lineage history works to upset rigid designations of centre versus periphery, whether couched in

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<sup>3</sup> On the constructedness and mid-seventeenth century origins of Lhasa's centrality, see Blondeau and Gyaltso, "Lhasa, Legend and History," in Pommaré 2003.

<sup>4</sup> For discussions of nineteenth and twentieth century Khams as a locus of non-sectarian scholarship and practice, see Smith 2001 and Jackson 2005.

geographic or sectarian terms. Arguably it is in part the practical fact of extensive travel that made this possible.<sup>5</sup>

However, the scope of such travel has not always been fully visible, possibly because several factors tend to obscure it. Scholars have long recognized the importance of long distance trade and lengthy pilgrimage journeys for the societies of the Plateau. Nevertheless, many ethnographic studies of Himalayan cultures, particularly western language studies, have tended for obvious practical reasons to concentrate on limited cultural and geographic areas. Similarly, historical works have also often focused closely on individual regional and cultural groupings, even where these studies note that important interconnections with the rest of the Himalayan region exist. As a result, the contemporary literature does not fully describe the complex human networks that link together often very geographically distant parts of the Himalayan area.

Nevertheless, in fact Himalayan scholar-practitioners have historically shown enormous enterprise in their search for good teachers and important teachings, and have been willing to travel great distances to contact them. Thus the effects of particularly charismatic teachers and engaging ideas have been notably wide spread, with individual lamas of outstanding brilliance having an impact across the whole Himalayan region. One of the most dramatic examples of this may be the case of the nineteenth century master rTogs ldan Shakya Shri (1853-1919),<sup>6</sup> whose impact, via his widely travelling students, reached from Khams in the east to Ladakh in the west and to remote valleys of the Indian border in the south. Indeed, his influence extends via the teachers in his lineage to the United States and European countries in the present day.<sup>7</sup>

The travels of the Kinnauri (Khu nu in Tibetan) scholar-yogi sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan (1895-1977)<sup>8</sup> as a student and later as a teacher in

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<sup>5</sup> See in this vein, Crook, "The Meditation Notebook of Tipun Padma Chogyal," in Osmaston 1997; Tashi Rabgias, *History of Ladakh called The Mirror Which Illuminates All* (pp. 485-7) and 'Brug chen Rin po che, *rTsibs ri'i par ma dKar chag* (pp. 57-64) which describe the diffusion of *ris med* ideas in Ladakh.

<sup>6</sup> For the life of rTogs ldan Shakya Shri, see the *nam thar* by Ka: thog Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho: *Grub dbang shakya shri'i nam thar me tog phreng ba*.

<sup>7</sup> I wish to thank Tashi Tsering for encouraging me to think about these connections, and especially for bringing the centrality of rTogs ldan Shakya Shri to my attention. For a discussion of rTogs ldan Shakya Shri's legacy in Ladakh in particular, see again Crook, in Osmaston 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Khu nu Rin po che's date of birth is given in several sources as 1894, but this is apparently incorrect, according to two authors who have written about his life. Both

his own right, offer an important twentieth century example of this mobility of ideas and persons, and of the extensive interpersonal networks such travels made possible. sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan (known as Khu nu Lama, Khu nu Rinpoche or Negi Rinpoche) travelled as a young man to Sikkim and then to many regions of Tibet in search of teachers. Later in his life he journeyed back to India in search of further instruction, and in response to the requests of his own students for teaching. His travels for the sake of learning in many ways parallel the journeys of his Sikkimese teacher, Khang gsar ba bLa ma O rgyan bstan 'dzin, who also travelled extensively in Central Tibet and Khams in order to study with various masters.

Their remarkable mobility across the Himalayan Plateau and parts of India offer a window into the network of cross-regional connections that have bound together geographically distant Himalayan intellectual and religious communities and allowed important lineages to spread across the Plateau. In this article, I briefly describe some aspects of their travels and in particular, the lineage connections this travel enabled Khu nu Rinpoche to make. In the closing section, I explore the fruitfulness of applying terms such as 'cosmopolitan' and 'modern' to Khu nu Lama and his fellow travellers.

*The life of Khu nu bLa ma sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan*

Khu nu bLa ma sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan is probably best known today as the author of a book of poems in praise of bodhicitta, the *Byang chub sems kyi bstod pa rinchen sgron ma*.<sup>9</sup> A deeply modest practitioner who actively shunned fame, he somewhat in spite of himself nevertheless became rather well known at several points in his life. While he was still quite young, his skill as a Sanskrit scholar and as an expert in poetics made him a popular teacher on those topics in both Khams and Central Tibet. Even more dramatically, toward the end of his life he became a teacher to His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama in India. This naturally brought him a certain prominence, although there are many stories about his tendency to slip away whenever there was a danger of public attention.

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mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche and K. Anrup Gasha agree that the correct date should be given as 1895, despite earlier printings of the 1894 date.

<sup>9</sup> This has been translated into English by Gareth Sparham under the title *Vast as the Heavens Deep as the Sea: Verses in Praise of Bodhicitta* (1999. Boston: Wisdom Publications).

As I describe in detail elsewhere, Khu nu Rinpoche's influence on Tibetan intellectual life is multi-faceted and significant in many fields. He is a crucial twentieth century figure in the areas of poetics, Sanskrit and Tibetan grammar, topics on which his scholarship was legendary. His legacy is even more significant for the study and practice of bodhicitta, a subject with which his name continues to be linked today, in particular through his best-known student, the Dalai Lama. In addition, he was an important twentieth century lineage holder for transmissions and practices connected with virtually every Tibetan Buddhist lineage, including systems of Dzogchen, Mahāmudrā and the Kalacakra tantra. This last is a dimension of his life and work that remains little known.

For all of these reasons, Khu nu Rinpoche played a significant (though intentionally low-profile) role in re-establishing the continuity of Tibetan intellectual and spiritual life in India after 1959. He was also a remarkable exemplar of the approaches to learning and practice often grouped under the rubric of *ris med*, or non-sectarianism. With this spirit as well, he influenced the current generation of Himalayan scholars and practitioners, particular those coming of age in India in the nineteen-sixties and nineteen-seventies.

Moreover, much like the nineteenth century Eastern Tibetan master rDza dPal sprul Rinpoche, with whose lineage Khu nu Lama is closely connected, Khu nu bLa ma sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan spent many years of his life teaching basic Buddhism and literacy and encouraging Buddhist practice in the small valleys of the Indian Himalayas from which he himself came. Like dPal sprul Rinpoche before him, he was particularly concerned to make Buddhist ideas and practices accessible to people in the most remote areas, especially those who lacked regular access to education.<sup>10</sup>

In his own teaching activities, Khu nu Rinpoche was thus part of the great dissemination of ideas between Khams, Central Tibet, Sikkim and the valleys of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh. Khu nu Lama participated in and helped extend a living network of scholarship, student-teacher relations and lineage connections that bound together people who were physically separated by great distances.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> I would like to thank E. Gene Smith for emphasizing this element of both dPal sprul and Khu nu Rinpoche's careers to me.

<sup>11</sup> Indeed, in an interview with his most prolific biographer K. Anrup Gasha (who was himself a student of Khu nu Lama's for many years, and is from the neighbouring Himalayan region of Lahaul), K. Anrup suggested that in his opinion

For the purposes of this article, Khu nu Lama's own studies are perhaps even more revealing than his teaching activities, and it is his studies that I shall describe briefly here. His pursuit of education was extensive and lasted for some thirty years in many different areas of the Himalayan region and India (indeed, arguably he never stopped studying, even at the end of his life). Because Khu nu Lama himself did not leave a written record of his travels, the chronology of his journeys for the sake of learning must be reconstructed from the oral records of his surviving friends and disciples, considered together with the somewhat limited textual sources that exist. Since new information is still coming to light, what follows is not the final word on his travels and studies, but forms a general sketch of what it is possible to know now. However, enough information is available to gain a sense of the scope of Khu nu Lama's travel (and of some others of his generation) and to glimpse the extensive interpersonal and lineage connections which all this arduous wandering made possible.

#### *Early travels to Sikkim and Central Tibet*

Khu nu bLa ma sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan was born in 1895 in a small village called Sunnam in the Kinnaur Valley in modern day Himachal Pradesh. His father's family was Nyingma and his mother's was Drukpa Kagyu (two of the three schools found in the Kinnaur area; Gelugpa institutions and practitioners also exist there).<sup>12</sup> As a young boy he was sent to his mother's family, where he began his studies under the guidance of his maternal uncle, Rasvir Das.<sup>13</sup>

Khu nu Rinpoche subsequently studied with and received ordination from bSod nams rgyal mtshan (b. 19th century), who had himself been a student of the great rTogs ldan Shakya Shri in Khams. Thus already in his earliest studies in his remote home valley, Khu nu Lama was affected by the great movement of ideas and teachers between far-distant regions of the Plateau. Some scholars have in fact suggested that this early connection with bSod nams rgyal mtshan may have planted the idea for his own future travels, and indeed that bSod

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Khu nu Lama was particularly interested in spreading Buddhism in the Himalayas. K. Angrup (Tib. Ngos grub ga zha ba) interview, September 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Ven. Gurucharan Singh Negi (Bisht), interview, April 2005.

<sup>13</sup> K. Angrup Gasha, *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzugs so*.

nams rgyal mtshan may have urged Khu nu Lama to one day go to Khams himself.<sup>14</sup>

In any event, at the age of 17,<sup>15</sup> wanting to learn more than was available in the Kinnaur area at that time, Khu nu Rinpoche decided to travel to Tibet to study, despite the resistance of his family. (In fact, such travel to Tibet was not entirely uncommon for motivated Kinnauri students.<sup>16</sup>) Before travelling all the way to Tibet, however, Khu nu Rinpoche first stopped in Gangtok in 1913, where he met the great Sikkimese literary scholar O rgyan kun bzang bstan 'dzin rdo rje Rin po che.<sup>17</sup>

Khang gsar ba O rgyan bstan 'dzin Rin po che (1863 - 1936) was the son of the Sikkimese minister bSam 'grub Khang gsar A thing Lhun grub. In his younger days, he himself had travelled extensively in Tibet, in particular in Khams. He also studied at Tshor phu during the time of the 15th Karmapa, Mkha' khyab rdo rje, and was especially noted for having been the student of rTogs ldan Kar ma smon lam od zer lhag bsam rgyal tshan. As the lineages for the Sanskrit tradition he studied (outlined below) show, he, like Khu nu Rinpoche after him, was extraordinarily fortunate in his teachers, and became the student of some of the greatest and most famed scholars of the *ris med* period in Central Tibet and Khams. He is particularly known for his commentarial works on the *sNyan ngag me long*.<sup>18</sup>

Khu nu Rinpoche studied poetics and began his grammatical studies with O rgyan bstan 'dzin at Rumtek, remaining in Sikkim for almost three years.<sup>19</sup> During that time he studied *sNyan ngag, Sum rtag,*

<sup>14</sup> BSod nams dbang grags, unpublished manuscript, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so*, p. 2a.

<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, while as one would expect, the vast majority of those travelling to Tibet for Buddhist education were men, some nuns also turn out to have made the trip for the same reason, although sadly not always meeting with the same breadth of educational opportunities. See Lamacchia, 2001 for a fascinating discussion of this aspect of cross-regional travel.

<sup>17</sup> K. Angrup Gasha, *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzhugs so*, p. 52.

<sup>18</sup> See Tashi Densapa Rinpoche, Introduction, to O rgyan bstan 'dzin's *sNyan ngag me long le'u bar pa'i 'grel pa*.

<sup>19</sup> K. Angrup Gasha, *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzhugs so*, p. 53.

Interestingly, mKhan Rin po che bDe chen rdo rje mentioned that Khu nu Rin po che also travelled in areas of North Sikkim during his time of study in Sikkim. mKhan Rin po che speculated that Khu nu Lama might have been travelling there together with bLa ma O rgyan bstan 'dzin. Interview, September 2004.

and both the *dByangs can* and *Candra pa* Sanskrit grammars, beginning what would be an exceptional mastery in these topics.<sup>20</sup>

Many decades later, the great Sa skya pa scholar sDe gzhung Rinpoche itemized two lineages for the Sanskrit lexical tradition taught by O rgyan bstan 'dzin as a result of O rgyan bstan 'dzin's own extensive travels in Khams. The first transmission comes from Zhe chen dBon sprul 'Gyur med mthu stobs rnam rgyal via Kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas, to Yongs 'dzin Lhag bsam rgyal tshan (who was tutor to the Karma pa mKha' khyab rdo rje), and from him to O rgyan bstan 'dzin. The second comes via Zhe chen dBon sprul 'gyur med mthu stobs rnam rgyal to 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and then to Ngor dPon slob Ngag dbang legs grub, and from him to O rgyan bstan 'dzin.<sup>21</sup>

It seems likely these are the lineages for the grammatical and poetic teachings that O rgyan bstan 'dzin shared with Khu nu Rinpoche as well. The lineage lists give a sense of the intellectual and spiritual world of which O rgyan bstan 'dzin's journey to Khams made him a part. (Khu nu Rinpoche would later meet and study with other masters from these same famous lineages.)

At the end of his life, Khu nu Rinpoche returned to Gangtok several times due to his relationship with the royal family.<sup>22</sup> From this, and from the length of his initial stay, one can hypothesize that he found his studies in Gangtok very engaging. It is certainly striking that this serious young student heading for Tibet - a Tibet that he envisioned as the heartland of Buddhist learning - should find such rich intellectual resources in Gangtok, and suggests something about what kind of place Gangtok was during the period.

Khu nu Rinpoche's experiences in Gangtok work to highlight the position of the city as a connecting point for travelling practitioners and scholars, as well as traders and other travellers. Dodin, for instance, mentions in an article on Khu nu Rinpoche that there were other Kinnauri students and residents in Gangtok when he first went there. Dodin's interview material from the Kinnauri scholar gSang sngags

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<sup>20</sup> mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so*, p. 2a.

<sup>21</sup> Jackson, p. 597, n.233.

<sup>22</sup> Khu nu Rin po che was guru to the Queen Mother and to Sem Tinley Ongmu Tashi, and made several visits to them in Gangtok in the nineteen seventies. They also came a number of times to see him in Bodhgaya. Khu nu Rin po che also performed *zhabs brtan* rituals on behalf of the King. Sem Tinley Ongmu Tashi, interview, September 2004. Khu nu Lama also taught several times at the Nyingma Shedra in Gangtok. mKhan Rin po che bDe chen rdo rje, interview, September 2004.



bstan 'dzin<sup>23</sup> suggests that Khu nu Rinpoche may have intentionally made Gangtok his destination in his early search for teachers, possibly because Kinnauris who had been there already had made it known to him.<sup>24</sup> Trulku Pema Wangyal likewise notes that when Khu nu Lama arrived in Gangtok he had a relative who was already living there. It was after this person urged him to learn Tibetan that he went to Rumtek to begin his studies.<sup>25</sup>

Khu nu Rinpoche's relationship with O rgyan bstan 'dzin seems to have been an extremely important connection for the young scholar. While my research on their interaction is not yet complete, one can discern a few hints. Khu nu Lama lists O rgyan bstan 'dzin Rinpoche as the first of his Nyingmapa root lamas, for instance, in a note that he composed in Kinnaur later in his life, in which he listed his root teachers in each of the four Tibetan Buddhist lineages.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps it is also possible to see O rgyan bstan 'dzin Rinpoche's influence in some of Khu nu Lama's later travels in Central Tibet and Khams, as Khu nu Lama's movements in many ways mirrored those of his teacher. Several years afterward in Tibet, for instance, Khu nu Rinpoche may have been following O rgyan bstan 'dzin Rinpoche's example when he formed a relationship with the Lhasa sMan stsis khang (Medical and Astrological Institute), where he was both a teacher and student. Both he and Lama O rgyan bstan 'dzin taught (and in Khu nu Rinpoche's case, studied) with the sMan stsis khang's great doctor mKhyen rab nor bu (1883-1962) who was personal physician to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.<sup>27</sup>

After studying in Sikkim for three years, Khu nu Lama left Gangtok and made his way to bKra shis lhun po Monastery in Shigatse.<sup>28</sup> Some who knew him suggest that he went there because the

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<sup>23</sup> gSang sngags bstan 'dzin was the father of Roshan Lal Negi, the famous Kinnauri scholar and biographer of Khu nu Lama sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan.

<sup>24</sup> Dodin, "Negi Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen: A preliminary account of the life of a modern Buddhist saint" in, Osmaston 1997, p. 85-86; p. 94 n. 9.

<sup>25</sup> Trulku Pema Wangyal, interview, April 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Khu nu Rinpoche's biographer K. Anrup obtained a copy of this handwritten list, the contents of which he shared with me. Interview, September 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Byams pa Phrin las, *Gangs ljongs gso rigs bstan pa'i nyin byed rim byon gyi rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs*, p. 437. K. Anrup explains that Khu nu Rinpoche was mKhyen rab nor bu's student, as well as his teacher in the literary sciences. Interview, September 2004.

<sup>28</sup> One interesting question is whether Khu nu Rinpoche took ordination during this first time at bKra shis lhun po, and moreover, whether he participated in the full monastic curriculum and schedule. At this point it is not possible to state his exact status with certainty, since several sources disagree on this point.

Tibetan province of Tsang was convenient to the Sikkimese border, and bKra shis lhun po was of course a famous seat of learning. However, K. Angrup Gasha suggests that Khu nu Rinpoche chose bKra shis lhun po intentionally because there is a historical connection between bKra shis lhun po and students from Kinnaur (and from other areas of modern-day Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh). Students from Kinnaur were traditionally housed in the Gu ge khams tshan with the monks from the Ngari area, and there were apparently several Khu nu bas there even in the forties and early fifties.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, monks at bKra shis lhun po could receive monthly scholarships of grain and were thus guaranteed support while they studied<sup>30, 31</sup>.

At bKra shis lhun po, Khu nu Rinpoche continued studies in grammar, poetics and the literary sciences (*rig gnas*) in general, as well as philosophy. He became a student of the great bKra shis lhun po dKa' chen Sangs rgyas dpal bzang with whom he studied in particular the *TSHad ma rnam 'grel*, the root text together with an (unspecified) commentary.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Rintan, interview, May 2005.

<sup>30</sup> K. Angrup Gasha, interview, September 2004; Rintan, interview, May 2005.

<sup>31</sup> The experiences of Kinnauris, Ladakhis and other monks from the Indian Himalaya at bKra shis lhun po is an interesting point for further study, since the role of the great monastic seats in actively recruiting and welcoming young men from outside the borders of Tibet is little known. An interesting comparison would be to the experiences of students from Mongolian areas in Drepung, Sera and Ganden. Mongolian students were often famously brilliant debaters and ultimately met with considerable success in both their spiritual and political activities following their Tibetan studies. Nevertheless, sometimes their own autobiographical materials note instances of conflict with the Tibetan students. See for instance the autobiography of the great Mongolian scholar and statesman, Aghvan Dorjiev, advisor to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. (Dorjiev, 1991) On the other hand, in a recent interview, one former Tibetan resident of the Gu ge khams tshan at bKra shis lhun po in the early nineteen fifties said that he remembered no instances of conflict at all between various Kinnauri and Ngari ba residents there. Rintan, interview, May 2005.

By way of contrast to the experiences of Himalayan students at these major Gelukpa seats, one might also consider the travels of Sikkimese monks, who primarily visited the Nyingma centres of rDo rje brag and sMin 'gro gling and the Karmapa's seat at Tshor phu.

<sup>32</sup> mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid ky'i zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so*, p. 2a.

After three years at bKra shis lhun po,<sup>33</sup> Khu nu Rinpoche studied and taught literary sciences in Lhasa and at several other places in Central Tibet.<sup>34</sup> He studied in Lhasa itself, in particular with scholars connected to the sMan stsis khang, of whom the most famous was, as already noted, mKhyen rab nor bu.<sup>35</sup> He also taught in several capacities, both at the sMan stsis khang and as a tutor to prominent families, including the sMon sgrol (*sic*; this may also refer to the sMon grong ecclesiastical house) and the bSam grub pho brang.<sup>36</sup>

He visited at Drikung til, where he both taught and studied with the great Drikung yogi Grub dbang A mgon Rinpoche.<sup>37</sup> He studied *PHyag rgya chen po* at a Drukpa centre called 'Khamda,' which may have been a retreat centre located above the Drolma Lhakhang, outside Lhasa.<sup>38</sup> According to oral accounts given by Khu nu Rinpoche to Trulku Pema Wangyal at the end of his life in Bodhgaya, at some point during this period in Central Tibet, Khu nu Rinpoche also studied at the major Gelukpa centres of Drepung, Sera and Ganden.<sup>39</sup>

At some point during this period, the Ninth Panchen Lama Chos kyi nyi ma (1883-1937) asked Khu nu Rinpoche to return to bKra shis lhun po, and to teach *rig gnas* in the Panchen Lama's special school for future civil servants in his administration - the sKyid na' school.<sup>40</sup> Kh unu Lama did so for several years.

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<sup>33</sup> K. Anrup, interview, September 2004, based on mKhas btsun bzang po's interview notes from Khu nu Rinpoche. Note that this time frame and some of the following chronology differs from both K. Anrup's earlier *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzhugs so* and the interview material provided by gSang sngags bstan 'dzin to Dodin; K. Anrup himself emphasizes that the updated chronology is the correct one.

<sup>34</sup> K. Anrup, *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzhugs so*, p. 54.

<sup>35</sup> K. Anrup, interview, September 2004; BSod nams dbang grags, unpublished manuscript, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Byams pa Phrin las, *Gangs ljongs gso rigs bstan pa'i nyin byed rim byon gyi rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs*, p. 437; mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so*, p. 2a; K. Anrup, interview, September 2004.

<sup>37</sup> Oral communication, 'Bri gung Pa tog 2005. See rGya mtsho, 'Bri gung dKon mchog. 2004. Note that the chronology for their meeting is very unclear; it is possible that they met after Khu nu Rinpoche's return to Central Tibet from Khams. This point requires further study.

<sup>38</sup> According to gSang sngags bstan 'dzin, as described in Dodin, p. 86. Spelling of Khamda not clear.

<sup>39</sup> Trulku Pema Wangyal, interview April 2005.

<sup>40</sup> K. Anrup, *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzhugs so*, p. 54; K. Anrup interview September, 2004. It should be noted that the

Khu nu Rinpoche continued in the sKyid na' school until he met Ka: thog Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho (1880-1923/25), who visited in the course of a pilgrimage to Central Tibet. Their meeting apparently made a profound impression on Khu nu Rinpoche, seemingly re-igniting Khu nu Lama's wish to travel to Khams and study there.<sup>41</sup>

### *Travel and study in Khams*

Both Lama O rgyan bstan 'dzin and Khu nu Lama sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan went to Khams in pursuit of teachings, journeys that seem to have been extremely important for each of them. Indeed, as mentioned already, one naturally wonders if Lama O rgyan bstan 'dzin's description of his own studies in Khams influenced Khu nu Lama's eventual decision to go. Both men were from regions outside of Tibet itself - regions geographically quite far from Khams. Through their travels there, they entered into some of the most important lineages and philosophical developments of their day, developments that seem to have had their epicentre in Eastern Tibet.

Khu nu Rinpoche journeyed to Khams in the early nineteen twenties. He remained in Khams for approximately fourteen years.<sup>42</sup> During this time, Khu nu Rinpoche met and studied with many of the most influential lamas of the time. Later in his life Khu nu Rinpoche listed his root gurus in each of the four major Tibetan lineages.<sup>43</sup> Most of the twenty-two lamas on that list were individuals he studied with in Khams.

While the scope of this article does not allow me to fully detail all the teachings Khu nu Rinpoche received while in Khams, I include here a brief summary of some of the most important connections he made

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chronology for this is confusing in some respects: the Ninth Panchen Lama was in China and Inner Mongolia during the years 1923-1937, suggesting that if he invited Khu nu Lama to the school prior to his departure, it would have had to be very early in the nineteen-twenties. However, at that time Khu nu Lama would have been quite a young man, and it is surprising to think that he would have received such a prestigious invitation at such a young age. The exact sequence of these events will require further research.

<sup>41</sup> bSod nams dbang grags interview, 2005.

<sup>42</sup> K. Angrup interview September, 2004, based on interview material from Khu nu Lama provided by mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche. Note that this differs slightly from the chronology provided by gSang sngags bstan 'dzin to Dodin.

<sup>43</sup> K. Angrup interview September, 2004, based on Khu nu Rinpoche's handwritten list.

there. This helps to give a picture of the significance of his travel in Khams, both for Khu nu Lama himself, and for his later contribution to Tibetan Buddhism in India after nineteen fifty-nine. Even this partial list also gives a sense of the notably non-sectarian approach Khu nu Rinpoche seems to have taken to Buddhist learning and practice. (It is worth noting that it is in part this ecumenical interest in all traditions that made Khu nu Lama such a valuable resource to the Tibetan community after nineteen fifty-nine. He was literally a human repository of many different teaching lineages, each of which he was apparently able to explain from its own particular point of view.<sup>44</sup>)

His first Khams pa teacher was Ka: thok Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho himself, with whom he studied for about three years.<sup>45</sup> Based on his oral interview with Khu nu Lama, mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche describes these studies with Ka: thok Si tu as being about '*nang don rig pa*,' which in this case according to K. Anrup means in particular meditation.<sup>46</sup> After this, Khu nu Lama began to travel extensively throughout the region, gathering initiations and transmissions for all schools of Tibetan Buddhism from the great masters of the day.<sup>47</sup>

Following his studies with Ka: thok Si tu Rinpoche, Khu nu Lama became one of the last students of the great scholar and heir to the tradition of rDza dPal sprul, mKhan po gZhan dga' (mKhan po gZhan phan chos kyi snang ba, 1871-1927). According to mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, Khu nu Lama stayed with him for about a year and a half. During his studies with gZhan dga' he received in particular the transmission of the *gZhung chen bcu gsum*, the "Thirteen Indian

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<sup>44</sup> Trulku Pema Wangyal for example notes that one of Khu nu Lama's great strengths as a teacher was his ability to explain each tradition's approach to a given topic, without blurring the traditions together, and also without ever asserting a particular view as finally correct. Thus his students were encouraged both to respectfully engage with each tradition, and to use their own powers of reasoning to navigate among the various viewpoints. (Trulku Pema Wangyal interview April 2005.)

<sup>45</sup> mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so*, p. 2b.

<sup>46</sup> mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so*, *ibid*; K. Anrup, interview September 2004.

<sup>47</sup> In the following partial list of teachings received, where not otherwise noted, the sources for all information are mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so* and K. Anrup interview September 2004, both based on the same oral interview done with Khu nu Rinpoche in the early nineteen seventies.

Classics," with *mchan 'grel*, for which mKhan po gZhan dga' was particularly famous.<sup>48</sup>

One scholar of this period of Khams pa religious history hypothesizes that Ka: thok Si tu Rinpoche may have made the introduction to mKhan po gZhan dga' for Khu nu Lama; this would help to explain how the Kinnauri scholar was able to gain acceptance as a student so close to the end of the master's life, when he was almost permanently in retreat.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche has suggested that since Khu nu Lama was the teacher of several important officials of the Central Tibetan government in Khams, it was these connections that opened many doors for him. In particular, Khri smon Nor bu dbang rgyal (1874-1945?) was a particularly important patron.<sup>50</sup>

Either source for the introduction would demonstrate the process by which someone who was in many ways an outsider could gradually enter into the network of lineage relationships in a new place.

However, there is also a moving story describing how, having developed great faith in mKhan po gZhan dga' simply from hearing his name, Khu nu Rinpoche stubbornly refused to leave the site of mKhan po gZhan dga's hermitage until the master had taught him.<sup>51</sup> That this story follows a traditional format of student-guru devotion does not necessarily make it untrue. Looking at Khu nu Rinpoche's lengthy list of gurus in Khams, one can at the moment only speculate about the exact circumstances of many of the connections, but it seems likely both that sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan's own devotion opened doors for him, and also that one introduction led to another.

Khu nu Rinpoche also studied with two other great masters of rDza dPal sprul Rinpoche's lineage, Mi nyag mKhan po Kun bzang bsod nams and mKhan po Kun bzang dPal ldan. As was often his pattern, he received teachings and transmissions from these lamas, while also

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<sup>48</sup> mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so*, *ibid.* See also Jackson, D. P. 2003, pp. 26-30 for a brief biographical summary of mKhanpo gZhan dga'.

<sup>49</sup> bSod nams dbang grags, interview, 2005. On the other hand, it is also possible that mKhan po gZhan dga's own compassion was responsible for his acceptance, in particular his recognition of the fact that Khu nu Lama had travelled such a vast distance for the sake of Buddhist learning. bSod nams dbang grags, interview, 2005; Tashi Tsering oral communication.

<sup>50</sup> This point will require additional research. mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, interview May 2005.

<sup>51</sup> bSod nams dbang grags, interview, 2005; rGyal dbang chos kyi nyi ma. *rDzogs chen dgon gyi lo rgyus*.

teaching them Sanskrit and literary arts; they were also at times co-students of other teachers at rDzogs chen Monastery.<sup>52</sup>

Khu nu Rinpoche's presentation of bodhicitta was strongly influenced by the commentaries of both of these masters on the *Bodhisattvacāryavatāra*, especially that of Kun bzang dpal ldan. (This is also to say that Khu nu Lama's presentation stemmed from the tradition of dPal sprul, whose teachings formed the bulk of these commentaries, in particular that of Kun bzang dpal ldan.)<sup>53</sup> At the end of his life, when he was in his turn transmitting these lineages to Tibetan lamas in India, Khu nu Rinpoche especially emphasized these commentaries. In particular he stressed their importance to his main student, the Dalai Lama.<sup>54</sup> As a result, these commentaries are the ones on which His Holiness the Dalai Lama relies primarily as well.

This example highlights the continuity of the lineage transmitted via Khu nu Rinpoche, from Khams in the nineteen twenties and thirties to India in the nineteen sixties and seventies, and into the present day, as His Holiness continues to frequently teach on the *Bodhisattvacāryavatāra* and bodhicitta in the tradition of Khu nu Rinpoche.

Another connection of particular interest is Khu nu Rinpoche's deep friendship with the young Dil mgo mkhyen brtse Rinpoche, which began during this time in Khams. The two studied with many of the same teachers, and in addition, Khu nu Lama taught Dil mgo mkhyen brtse Sanskrit. Many years later in India, Dil mgo mkhyen brtse Rinpoche would recommend Khu nu Lama as a Sanskrit teacher to his own students (to whom Khu nu Lama several times taught *rDzogs chen* texts as well.)<sup>55</sup>

During his time in Khams, Khu nu Rinpoche also became a student of the great Sakya pa teacher sGa 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan (1870-1940). Indeed, according to one biography of that master, Khu nu Rinpoche was one of his main, or most fortunate, students.<sup>56</sup> Khu nu Rinpoche returned several times to meet with him and receive teachings, both at the Dzongsar Shedra while the master was teaching

<sup>52</sup> Trulku Pema Wangyal, interview April, 2005.

<sup>53</sup> Trulku Pema Wangyal, interview April, 2005.

<sup>54</sup> Trulku Pema Wangyal, interview April 2005.

<sup>55</sup> Trulku Pema Wangyal, interview April, 2005.

<sup>56</sup> See Kun dga' bstan pa, *rnam thar sKal bzang rna rgyan*. Also see K. Angrup *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzhugs so*, and bZang po, mKhas btsun Rin po che. nd. *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so*.

there, and later at the hermitage of Ga'u ri khrod. Among the Sakya teachings which Khu nu Lama received from him were major texts connected to the *Lam 'bras*, as well as Sapan's *sDom gsum rab dbye* and others.

Khu nu Lama also met the great 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse chos kyi blo gros (1893-1959) several times, and received many tantric and sutric transmissions from him, including the *rGyud sde spyi'i mdzes rgyan* and *Na ro mkha spyod ma'i khrid yig*. He also received the *lung, dbang* and *khrid* for the Seventeen Nyingma Tantras, the *gNyug sems*, Dodrupchen's *gSang snying spyi don 'od gsal nying po*, and Rongtonpa's *Abhisamayalañkāra* commentary, among many others.

From the great scholar 'Bru khog bLa ma 'Jam dbyangs grags pa, Khu nu Rinpoche received the Kalacakra commentary *Dri med 'od kyi 'grel chen*, as well as many Drukpa Kagyu teachings. In addition, Khu nu Lama studied other topics with him, such as medicine, which are connected to the Kalacakra Tantra system. 'Jam dbyangs grags pa's brother bKra shis rgyal mtshan likewise taught him astrology, also important for the Kalacakra.

At Ser shul gon pa, Khu nu Rinpoche learned Gelukpa lam rim from Khri pa dGe legs bstan dar, as well as receiving transmissions for the Gelukpa tradition of Demchok. Subsequently at 'Dan khog rnam rgyal ling, Khu nu Rinpoche met Lama Dam chos, from whom he learned Karma Kagyu teachings.

Sometime after this at rDzogs chen Monastery, Khu nu Lama met lHa rgyal Tshul khrims blo gros, the famous tantra, Kangyur and Tanyur scholar. From him Khu nu Lama received many *rDzogs chen* teachings from the tradition of Longchenpa and Rongdzom. For a year, Khu nu Lama also studied the medicine tantras with the medical expert Amchi A seng (in an unspecified location).

Returning to Derge, Khu nu Rinpoche received the *lung-s* for the complete works of Dwags po lha rje, and transmissions for the *sGrol dkar rjes gnang sgrub thabs* and for *bDe chen zhing du dren pa'i smon lam* from the Eleventh Si tu Rinpoche. Also at Derge, though perhaps somewhat later, the famous Derge Gon chen mKhan po Nga dbang bsam gtan blo gros (1868-1931) gave Khu nu Rinpoche teachings including the *'Jigs byed kyi bka' dbang*.

Around this time, Be ri mKhyen brtse Rinpoche gave Khu nu Rinpoche a number of major Drikung teachings, including the *dGongs gcig* commentary *rDo rje ma* and the *rTen snying lnga ldan*. Following his familiar pattern, Khu nu Rinpoche in return taught him about literature.



As can be seen from the above, Khu nu Rinpoche himself taught extensively in Khams, mainly on literary topics such as Sanskrit, poetics, and Tibetan grammar. Among his most important teaching connections was that with the Derge royal family to whom he taught *rig gnas*; the Derge princess became one of his main students.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, during the years nineteen twenty-six and seven, Khu nu Lama was the Sanskrit teacher of the great Sakya lama sDe gzhung Rinpoche.<sup>58</sup> Elsewhere, in Chamdo, government officials requested him to teach *rig gnas*, both literary arts and topics in medicine and astrology. At many of the monasteries and hermitages where Khu nu Lama received transmissions and instruction, he was also requested to teach *rig gnas* to the resident monks and lamas.

Interestingly, Khu nu Rinpoche does not seem to have been the only scholar from a far off Himalayan region to be teaching and studying in Khams at that time. Jackson records that while Khu nu Lama was in residence at rDzogs chen Monastery with sDe gzhung Rinpoche, teaching him Sanskrit, there were several Bhutanese monks staying there as well, who were also studying Sanskrit with Khu nu Lama.<sup>59</sup> Clearly, Khu nu Rinpoche and his teacher O rgyan bstan 'dzin were not the only ones to travel great distances in pursuit of learning. Khams during that time was apparently home to multiple groups of such visiting scholars.

### Conclusion

Tibetans and people in the Himalayan world in general are justly famous for their willingness to travel great distances to go on pilgrimage or engage in trade. I have argued here that travel for the sake of study and for receiving teachings is an equally significant aspect of mobility across the Plateau. Such travel, and the intellectual curiosity and spiritual intensity which motivated people to embark on such journeys apparently brought scholar-practitioners from a great range of backgrounds, regions and local cultures into extended contact with each other. As a kind of thought exercise, therefore, I suggest we might characterize the time of the *ris med* movement ('movement' here in the sense of the development of networks of scholars who shared a

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<sup>57</sup> K. Angrup, *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzhu gs so*.

<sup>58</sup> Jackson, D. P. 2003.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p. 64.

*ris med* attitude) as an instance of a kind of 'cosmopolitanism' in the Himalayas.

The cultural fact of regional, linguistic and lineage diversity in the geographic centres of *ris med* activity, especially in Khams; individual scholars' intellectual and spiritual stance of curiosity toward all Tibetan traditions; their interest in studying as many traditions as possible; and the plurality of lineage connections and thus of intellectual and spiritual authority - all these contribute to a situation of considerable fluidity and openness.

Needless to say, it would be a mistake to impose models of intellectual life or modernity taken too rigidly from western, especially European experiences. The Khams of scholars such as mKhan po gZhan dga', which Khu nu Rinpoche visited to such great benefit, was overwhelmingly rural except for a few centres such as Derge. This in itself is a radical difference from the European city centres in which the modern western notion of cosmopolitanism developed. Furthermore, the process of study with a given master and of thereby joining what one might call the 'community of scholars' (or of lineage holders) was a highly individual and personal experience, although strong patterns and networks of relationship tie all these individuals together.

The spiritual and scholarly networks of the Plateau in all these ways appear quite different from the nineteenth and early twentieth century British culture of learned societies, or from the European experience of literary salons or cafe society, to cite two famous models of cosmopolitanism. In that sense, both the use of the term 'movement' to describe the developments of that time, and the notion of a kind of 'cosmopolitanism' must be handled with care. I do not intend the word 'cosmopolitan' to obscure the uniqueness of the Himalayan experience, or to unduly link Himalayan experiences to contemporaneous developments in other, very different societies.

However, there has recently been interest in exploring the usefulness of the term 'modernity' to describe various Tibetan and Himalayan experiences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (Indeed, among other developments, in 2003 there was a conference at Columbia University in New York devoted explicitly to Tibetan Modernities.) It is interesting to explore the resonances of the term 'cosmopolitan' while considering what sort of modernity individuals like Khu nu Rinpoche may (or may not) have been creating.

Khu nu Rinpoche and most scholars of his generation were deeply and lovingly concerned with the past. (Indeed, even the iconoclast dGe 'dun chos 'phel - who knew Khu nu Rinpoche in India - had a major

interest in the past, despite his more radical attitude toward it.) Thus any notion of modernity associated with these scholar-practitioners would paradoxically need to be a modernity that includes that past.

Scholars like Khu nu Rinpoche were interested in the continuity of the masters of each lineage and with traditionally valued forms of learning, in both the Buddhist and the 'minor' disciplines of knowledge, such as Sanskrit. They were not developing any sort of modernity that rejected or intended to supersede the past - quite the contrary. They were in fact in pursuit of a renewed relationship with the great traditions whose roots rested in the long history of both Tibetan and Indian scholarship and practice. Thus I suggest that if we use the term 'modernity' to characterize their work, we do so in a nuanced way as a 'modernity' of renewal and re-appropriation.

It is nevertheless provocative to consider what we might call these cross-Himalayan networks of teacher-student connections that resulted from travel between regions. Perhaps the term 'cosmopolitan' can encourage further reflection on the nature of various forms of Himalayan modernity, and can further serve to reinforce an appreciation for the extremely sophisticated level of Tibetan-language medium intellectual life of the early and mid-twentieth century period.

I myself would argue that it was precisely in the devoted return to Buddhist sources, for which Sanskrit study is the paradigm, that a great mind like Khu nu Lama (and Kong sprul before him) could renew the past's vibrancy and usefulness for practitioners of the present. That practice of renewing one's relationship with the living traditions of the past is its own form of modernity. In the boundary-crossing search for the most valuable knowledge regardless of geographic region or sectarian tradition, there is a particularly Himalayan form of cosmopolitanism.

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